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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: De Gaulle's Problems

1. There has been a recent spate of pessimistic reports from France, reflecting both the accelerated tempo of Algerian developments and growing apprehension in France over the political consequences of prolonged one-man rule.

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that the situation had deteriorated to the point where "it is difficult to see how De Gaulle can get things back in hand." Two days before, the US Embassy wrote: "Faced with the same problems in an earlier stage of development, the Fourth Republic foundered 43 months after the Algerian conflict began. The Fifth Republic will have completed the 43rd month of its Algerian nightmare in January, 1962."

2. De Gaulle has now successfully swung French public opinion around to accepting the inevitability of Algerian independence, but his intensified search for the means by which France can retire in good order has strengthened the determination of extremist military and civilian elements to block him. His announced intention to have a solution of the Algerian problem under way by the end of 1961 may now be boomeranging. The rebels' hesitancy to agree to a settlement short of France's complete surrender is leading the European settlers to anticipate that he is about to start a "regroupment" program as a step toward complete French "disengagement." Renewed negotiations with the PAG might be taken as a signal by the Secret Army Organization (OAS) to unleash a new settler uprising which the Army would at least refrain from suppressing. The embassy reported on 12 October that "It now seems to be the generally-held view, in the metropole and in Algeria, that the situation in Algeria is rapidly building up to a bloody climax

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in which the OAS will make another, although not necessarily last, desperate attempt to block De Gaulle's policy." The embassy added, however, that informed French circles are more optimistic now than they were a week or two ago concerning the army's loyalty.

3. De Gaulle's preoccupation with maintaining French national unity, and his pledge to safeguard the rights of the Europeans and pro-French Moslems may still result in an attempt to partition Algeria into three autonomous regions that might eventually federate. This would not only mollify political critics in France, but it would also satisfy army objections to "abandonment."

4. Whether or not the OAS attempts an uprising among European Algerians, the attitude of the army is still the determining factor. Conscripts and reserve officers reflect the evolution of metropolitan public opinion in favor of De Gaulle and his Algerian policy, but the bulk of the officer corps in the army--and increasingly in the air force--is anti-De Gaulle in its basic sympathies and is growingly concerned about the danger of one-man rule. Hitherto silent senior officers are beginning to express the intention to influence political events. They want to control extremists and divert the bulk of the officer corps away from the idea that any army seizure of power is desirable. Their aim is an orderly transition of power, should De Gaulle die or be removed suddenly; in any case they want to support republican institutions rather than a fascist regime.

5. Particularly since the 8 September attempt to assassinate De Gaulle, moderate political leaders have begun to try to arouse public interest in a "democratic alternative"--a coalition ranging from Socialists to Conservatives--which could take power in the event of De Gaulle's departure from the scene.

6. Politically, the Fifth Republic is stable in the sense that cabinet crises are unknown and that De Gaulle commands overwhelming public support. It is seriously questioned, however, that such popularity will continue to be politically effective in critical situations. De Gaulle's disdain for politicians, and the ineptness Premier Debre has exhibited in dealing with Parliament have eroded the normal ties between government and public. The cabinet is largely a body of "technicians" few of whom are responsive to political pressure.

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7. The dangers inherent in this situation were patent this summer when farm agitation nearly got out of hand. Labor has been remarkably restrained, but the unions are becoming more insistent. De Gaulle has the constitutional power to meet parliamentary opposition head on and call for new elections with confidence in broad public support. This will be decreasingly effective, however, in view of the growing eagerness of various political and economic elements to criticize the regime. Socialist leader Guy Mollet and some of De Gaulle's close advisers have urged him to reestablish contact with the political parties and other key groups in the nation, and in late September he made some moves to accomplish this.

8. Simultaneous expression of grievances in direct farm action, strikes, and parliamentary censure is currently unlikely, and De Gaulle's major worry at the moment is military loyalty when he acts regarding Algeria. De Gaulle has not been as successful as he hoped in focussing public and particularly military attention on the necessity for speedily disengaging from Algeria in order to marshal forces in Europe against Soviet threats. Many officers regard the prospect of rebel control of Algeria as really a halfway house to communism and the outflanking of NATO. Nevertheless, the Berlin crisis has been a sobering influence on military opinion. De Gaulle's ability to reach an Algerian settlement without precipitating his downfall may therefore depend to a considerable degree on whether he can make his decisive moves regarding Algeria before Berlin tensions subside.

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